

Press kit

Helga Paris, Photographer

8 November 2019 – 12 January 2020

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Torsten Musial: "Helga Paris. An Archive in Black and White"

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As of 5 November 2019

Information

Title	Helga Paris, Photographer
Dates	8 November 2019 – 12 January 2020
Venue	Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4, 10117 Berlin Tel. +49 (0)30 200 57-1000, info@adk.de
Opening hours	Tue – Sun 11 am – 7 pm
Exhibition admission	€ 6/4, free admission for under 19s and Tuesdays from 3 pm Free admission on 8 and 9 November as part of “30th Anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution – Fall of the Berlin Wall”, a comprehensive project of Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH
Guided tours	Wed 5 pm, Sun at noon, € 3 plus exhibition ticket
Curator’s tour	with Inka Schube on Sunday, 24 November 2019, noon
Opening	Thursday, 7 November 2019, 7 pm with Jeanine Meerapfel (President of the Akademie der Künste), Klaus Lederer (Senator for Culture and Europe), Ellen Strittmatter (ifa, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), Inka Schube (Curator) Songs: Nino Sandow
Events	Thursday, 5 December 2019, 7 pm, € 6/4 Helga Paris archive presentation Welcome: Werner Heegewaldt (Director of the Archives of the Akademie der Künste), Ingomar Lorch (Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung) Guests: Helmut Brade, Elke Erb, Christian Grashof, Annett Gröschner, Peter Kahane, Bert Papenfuß Sunday, 12 January 2020, 7 pm, free admission Closing event and book release: Helga Paris. Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981/82, Spector Books Publishing, Leipzig, 2019
Partners	In cooperation with ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen). Part of the “30 Year Anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution – The Fall of the Berlin Wall”, a comprehensive project of Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH. With the kind support of the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung, which enabled the cataloguing of the living legacy and the production of new prints from three unpublished series. Helke Misselwitz's documentary film triptych on the life and work of Helga Paris was made possible with funding from the DEFA Foundation and the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf.

Team

Curator	Inka Schube
Documentary film triptych	Helke Misselwitz
Project management	Cornelia Klauß
Project coordination	Mechthild Cramer von Laue
Exhibition design	Roswitha Kötz
Exhibition realisation	Antje Mollenhauer, Jörg Scheil, Isabel Schlenther, Mount Berlin Nadine Brüggebors (Editing)
Registrars	Catherine Amé, Stefan Kaltenbach
Exhibition and event technology	Juliane Keßler, Reinhard Pusch, Marco Starke, Vision B, Bert Günther, Martin Kautsch, Frank Kwiatkowski, Björn Matzen, Lexa Thomas, Jochen Saueracker
Education programme	Marion Neumann, Martina Krafczyk, Tuan Do Duc
Design	Heimann + Schwantes
Press and Public Relations	Sabine Kolb, Mareike Wenzlau, Marianne König, Rosa Gosch (Website)

The Akademie der Künste is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.



Federal Government Commissioner
for Culture and the Media

Press release

Helga Paris, Photographer

From 8 November 2019 to 12 January 2020 at its exhibition halls at Pariser Platz, the Akademie der Künste will present the photographic work of Helga Paris from 1968 to 2011. Featuring 275 works, including many individual images and series that are to be shown for the first time, this will be her most comprehensive exhibition to date and the first retrospective of the artist in her home city of Berlin in 25 years. Excerpts from the extensive Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981–82 (Leipzig Central Station 1981–82), Moskau 1991/92 (Moscow 1991/92) and Mein Alex (My Alex) (2011) series will be seen for the first time, among others.

In addition to the photographer's special ability to make ever-changing compressed contemporary history tangible in her images and series over the course of decades, it is her tender, graceful and heavily nuanced black-and-white modulations expressing social empathy that make her work unmistakable.

Helga Paris was born in 1938 in Gollnow, Pomerania (today Polish town of Goleniów), and grew up in Zossen near Berlin. She began her work as a self-taught photographer in the 1960s. She became one of the key chroniclers of life in East Berlin with images of her neighbourhood in the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg, pictures of pub-goers, sanitation workers, the women from the VEB Treffmodelle clothing factory, artists, punks, children from Hellersdorf and passers-by from Alexanderplatz. Helga Paris also took photographs in Transylvania (1980), Georgia (1982) and the city of Halle (1983–1985), where she produced her Diva in Grau series that was banned from being shown until 1989/1990, as well as in Volgograd (1990), New York (1995) and Poland (1996/1997), among others. Helga Paris has been a member of the Film and Media Art Section of the Akademie der Künste since 1996.

The curator of the exhibition is art historian Inka Schube, who has worked with Helga Paris on numerous occasions. Filmmaker Helke Misselwitz will present an installation involving interviews with Helga Paris on the topics of origin, the changing city and her work as a photographer in East Germany and up into the early 21st century.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the Spector Books publishing house, Leipzig has released the photography book Helga Paris. Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981/82.

This year Helga Paris donated her archive to the Akademie der Künste. With 6,300 films and almost 230,000 negatives, a rich, subjective chronicle of four decades of Berlin and German history becomes accessible. On the occasion of the **archive presentation on 5 December 2019**, companions of Helga Paris, artists and portraitists such as Helmut Brade, Elke Erb, Christian Grashof, Annett Gröschner, Peter Kahane and Bert Papenfuß will talk about the cooperation and impact of their pictures.

An exhibition by the Akademie der Künste in cooperation with the ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), Part of the "30 Year Anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution – The Fall of the Berlin Wall", a comprehensive project of Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH. With the kind support of the Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung, which enabled the cataloguing of the living legacy and the production of new prints from three unpublished series. Helke Misselwitz's documentary film triptych on the life and work of Helga Paris was made possible with funding from the DEFA Foundation and the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf.

Statement by the curator

Few of the numerous mirror images found in the history of art are as packed with “the world” as this one: in 1971, Helga Paris, 33 years old and mother of two children, seeks in the mirror her image as a photographer. Incorporated into it are projections of innocent children’s nudity, romantic friendship between women, mediated femininity and collectively politicised childhood. A butterfly rests on a row of books, among them a multi-volume edition of Karl Kraus.

Over the coming three and a half decades, Paris will present the themes touched on here in an extensive, multi-faceted oeuvre. Exhibiting more than 270 black-and-white photographs, including many shown for the first time, the Akademie der Künste is affording the most comprehensive insight into the work of the photographer Helga Paris to date. Born in 1938 in Gollnow, Pomerania (today Goleniów, Poland) and raised in Zossen, she has been living in Berlin since 1956.

The first individual pictures that established her body of work were taken in the 1960s. There, for example, is that still life with a fish. Formally, it ties in with the engagement with works of classical modernism undertaken by painters of her generation a few years earlier.

The fine arts, film, theatre and literature will have a far greater impact on Paris than the history of photography: she is closely associated with the circle around the authors Elke Erb and Adolf Endler, as well as with Christa and Gerhard Wolf. She makes her living with portrait photography and reproductions for numerous artist friends and with theatre photography for Benno Besson, for example.

But her true subject matter is the everyday life on her doorstep: from 1966 Paris lives in the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg. At the time, it is inhabited almost exclusively by workers’ families. In the early 1970s, she starts photographing the people in her neighbourhood, in their flats, at their parties and on their everyday trails. But she is not only a chronicler of Prenzlauer Berg. She also photographs elsewhere and on her travels. In Halle, Transylvania, Georgia, Moscow, Volgograd and New York, just as at home in Berlin, she is constantly concerned with what it feels like to be part of history, in company or alone. Paris never turns this into an ideological issue. Her gaze always shows solidarity with the people she photographs. This is presumably the origin of the special, fundamental approachability of her visual world.

In 1981/1982 at Leipzig Main Station, on platforms and in the restaurant, halls and corridors, Paris photographs travellers, people waiting, people hurrying and those who work here, whether as lottery ticket sellers, kitchen staff, waitresses or guards. Her observations of the energy of movement and meeting of the most diverse people combine in the melancholy of the light saturated with the past with the stately architecture as a gateway to the world to yield a grand narrative on the diversity of life in East Germany.

At about the same time, Paris takes photographs of ‘Berlin youth’, she discovers tenderness and vulnerability behind the demonstratively defiant façades. Two years later, when she photographs textile workers where she herself had been a trainee during her student days, her pictures open up a broad, seemingly exemplary spectrum of feminine being-in-the-world.

In her probably best-known series Häuser und Gesichter. Halle 1983–1985 (Houses and Faces. Halle, 1983–1985), she witnesses the rebellious vitality of the people in a city deliberately abandoned to decay and destruction. An exhibition of these photographs in Halle, banned in 1986, was visited by more than 16.000 people in five weeks during the winter of 1989/1990.

Paris travels to Moscow several times in the early 1990s. For the loss of orientation in this period of a collapsing world order regarded for decades as immutable, she finds images unlike any hitherto. But perhaps here too, as in Halle, she simply sees with unflinching compassion what is: people, animals and situations that have lost their bearings, their ‘normality’. Darkness descends over church towers. The descendant of an avant-gardist demonstrates his fitness in an architectural icon of modernism, the Melnikov House. A dog stands waiting nervously outside a locked, dilapidated door. At a loss, the poet Bulat Okudzhava shrugs his shoulders. A girl exuberantly tosses her head back, as if it were about to fly off. – Paris’ photographs have never been as literary, before or since. Here she follows in the footsteps of Mikhail Bulgakov’s tales of Moscow in the 1920s.

A little later in Volgograd and New York, Paris investigates the presence of Russian veterans of the Second World War. In the USA she meets a man who in 1945 was in the army from whom she fled with her mother and sister from her Pomeranian birthplace of Gollnow to Zossen in the south of Berlin. This is one of the marginal narratives of her work, yet one that refers to a kind of primordial territory, for Zossen was a central location of the Wehrmacht from 1939 to 1945, before becoming the high command of the Soviet Armed Forces and the western troop formations in Germany from 1954 to 1994. After their departure, the places that Paris had experienced as adventure playgrounds in the interim period become accessible again for the first time in decades. Now they offer projection surfaces for successive layerings of past and present. She photographs déjà-vus: young, semi-naked men, bursting with vitality, whose demeanour makes them hard to place in time; uniformed individuals between trees; blurred ruins; a threateningly close monkey face. What is it that dominates the memory of childhood? Is it the experienced fears or the warmth that the women were able to give their children in those years despite the difficult circumstances?

Paris was one of four photographers invited to photograph in Hellersdorf in 1998. In the tower block estate built in East Berlin in the 1980s, she searches for her familiar workers' faces. But her subjects' behaviour and gestures communicate new ideas about the good life that are alien to her. In a school she photographs pupils. She succeeds in portraying them in the still open-ended present, as an interrogation of the future.

In the late 1990s, Paris starts photographing at Alexanderplatz. Ever since the novel of the same name by Alfred Döblin from 1929, it has symbolised the proletarian East of Berlin. It is a railway interchange in all directions, while also being synonymous with those who have to fight for their place in society. Here, she once again produces portraits of women, men and children, now almost monumental in aura.

A short time later, with great formal openness, she explores her body's memories of this place. *Mein Alex (My Alex)*, as her last work is called, is now almost deserted, a sketchily open description of a realm of possibility.

Inka Schube, 2019

Supplemented version of the text "Helga Paris, Photographer" by Inka Schube from the *MuseumsJournal* 4/2019.

Works in the exhibition (Series by Helga Paris)

Familie Köstner (Köstner Family)
1968–1983

Müllfahrer (Garbage Drivers)
1974

Berliner Kneipen (Berlin Pubs)
1975

Siebenbürgen (Transylvania)
1980

Berliner Jugendliche (Berlin Youth)
1981/1982

Tieckstraße
1981/1982

Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981–82 (Leipzig Central Station 1981–82)
1981/1982 / 2019

Selbstporträts (Self-Portraits)
1981–1989

Georgien (Georgia)
1982

Häuser und Gesichter. Halle 1983–1985 (Buildings and Faces. Halle 1983–1985)
1983–1985

Frauen im Bekleidungswerk VEB Treffmodelle Berlin (Women at the Clothing Factory VEB Treffmodelle Berlin)
1984

Moskau (Moscow 1991/92)
1991/92 / 2019

Erinnerungen an Z. (Memories of Z.)
1994

Russische Veteranen des 2. Weltkrieges, Wolgograd (Russian Veterans of Second World War, Volgograd)
1995

Russische Veteranen des 2. Weltkrieges, New York (Russian Veterans of Second World War, New York)
1995

Podróż Polska – Die polnische Reise (Podróż Polska – The Polish Journey)
1996–1997

Hellersdorf
1998

Menschen auf dem Alexanderplatz (People on Alexanderplatz)
1999–2007

Mein Alex (My Alex)
2011 / 2019

Texts in the exhibition

Köstner Family, 1968–1981

In 1966 the Paris family – painter Ronald, Helga and their children Robert and Jenny – were one of the first artist families to move to Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district. Encouraged by documentary filmmaker Peter Voigt, Helga Paris began taking photographs in earnest. She devoted herself to what was nearby and soon-to-be familiar: the surrounding streets and their residents. The Köstner family lived in the same building.

Self-Portraits, 1981–1989

In 1981 Helga Paris began a series of self-portraits, a subject which also reached a temporary break in a version presented here. The series was triggered by a very personal, intimate observation of changing expressions on one's own face. Initially, Paris did not even consider public presentation. Instead, it was the experience of an almost cathartic effect of the photographic view of oneself which induced her to continue her work.

Transylvania, 1980

Helga Paris travelled to Romania in 1980 on a commission to take photographs for a publication – through publishing house editor Stefan Orendt. The language and culture of the Transylvanian Saxons that have lived there since the 12th century have survived in astonishing ways. The differing ways of life and cultural traditions of the Romanians, the Sinti and the Germans here directly collided. Helga Paris described the experience of this trip as defining for her future artistic work.

Women from the VEB Treffmodelle Clothing Factory, 1984

At the VEB Treffmodelle clothing factory, Helga Paris photographed women, whom she met in the nearby supermarket and those who piqued her interest. The place and workflow were familiar to her: She worked there as a trainee during her studies.

Berlin Pubs, 1974–1975

Her sympathy for the vocational daily life of a neighbour, whose daughter was bullied in school as the “garbage man's kid”, induced Helga Paris to offer the journal *Das Magazin* a photographic series about his work in 1974. The series *Berlin Pubs* was published in the same magazine somewhat later. The photographer wrote texts for both series.

People on Alexanderplatz, 1999–2007

End of the 1990s Helga Paris began taking photographs on Alexanderplatz. This place, which since Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) has been synonymic with those who have to struggle just to survive, would preoccupy the photographer for more than a decade.

Memories of Z.

By Helga Paris, 1994

My sister wanted my mother to go into the water with us. That was when the Russians forced their way into the air-raid shelter. I was afraid that Mother would hear her pleading. My sister was eight, I was six.

I thought rape was when they tore a woman's earrings out.

When I came home from school the flat was still cold. There was a woven basket with large pieces of firewood by the stove. I liked lighting the fire very much. I cut little wood shavings with a kitchen knife, wrapped them in paper, and piled the wood on top crosswise. It was exciting to watch whether the flames would be strong enough to make the big logs catch. When it was really burning, the wood as well, I still sat there for a while. I liked the smell of the drying uniforms, which my mother had hung around the stove so that she could give them back to the Russian soldiers, well ironed and folded – for bread.

I found my loveliest shoes in a deserted attic. Silver leather, high heels, buckles, little buttons. With thick socks they almost fit. "Size 35" was stamped into the fine leather sole. Actually we went barefoot.

The greatest shame for us girls was having to push this handcart around town: four small solid metal wheels, with sheet metal on top. The cobblestones caused it to make an absolutely dreadful noise. Once, though, it was a source of unexpected pleasure. Some men near the station asked us to carry their suitcases and musical instruments to the "Deutsches Haus". In return they gave us complimentary tickets for the concert that evening. We sat proudly in the front row, and Otto Kermbach gave us a wink.

We liked playing "I'm furious with ...". A circle was divided up like a cake. Each piece was a different country. Each child stood with one leg in his or her country, and the other leg outside it, ready to run away. One child shouted: "I'm furious with Poland!" Everyone ran away, Poland ran into the middle and shouted: "Stop." One of the children had to get there in three steps. If they didn't make it, everyone could take a piece of Poland. Everyone wanted to be America the most.

There was something behind a wooden fence on Weinbergstrasse that we couldn't explain. A white snake came out through a hole. But only we children saw it. The adults went past as though there was nothing there.

The linden trees were blooming. Sitting in the sun behind the barns licking your knees – that smelled good.

Our neighbours' white Pomeranian liked travelling on steam trains. Once he even got as far as Rangsdorf. People there knew him and put him back on the train to Z.

My mother went to the masked ball as Little Red Riding Hood. No one recognized her, not even my big brother. She was almost poisoned by the pure spirits and lay in bed blind for three days.

My grandpa had nailed chicken wire to the front of the bookcase because the glass panes were missing. He chewed tobacco constantly and drank my grandma's "hope tonic" because it contained alcohol. Everyone said he used to be amusing. He died of starvation in 1947.

Once there was a circus. A hypnotist made Mrs Polomka lie on the ground like a baby and shout "Mama". She wept in shame afterwards.

There was a wooden fence in front of the ruined town hall. It had posters on it advertising the unification of the Communist and Socialist parties. I only remember it because of the rhyme we children used to chant: "SED liegt im Schnee, das tut weh" (The SED lies in the snow, that causes woe).

Tante Hanni had an Agfa "Billy Record". A lot of photographs from this time were cut in two. The Russians are missing. We were very fond of Sasha. He wanted to marry my Auntie Dora. When news of their relationship got out, she went to the German prison and he went to the Russian one. We never saw him again. Sasha could draw wonderfully. An eagle by him seemed to me to be the most beautiful picture in the world.

The major lived in the top room. He always knocked softly and waited in the kitchen doorway after he had bowed and asked for tea water.

Once my brother came home with a piece of salted butter as big as a footstool. My mother said, "Now we'll live the fat life", and didn't ask any questions. Ever since then, whenever I smell rancid butter I feel a mixture of abhorrence and greed.

(Helga Paris is grown up in Zossen near Berlin)

Biographies

Helga Paris

- 1938 born in Gollnow (Pomerania), today Goleniów (Poland)
- 1945 Escape to Zossen, her mother's hometown in the south of Berlin
- 1956–1960 Studied fashion design at the Engineering School for the Clothing Industry in Berlin
- 1961 working as a lecturer for costume design at a company vocational school and working as a Commercial artist for the German advertising agency DEWAG
- 1962 Collaboration in the Berlin-based company founded by Wolf Biermann and Brigitte Soubeyrand Arbeiter- und Studententheater b.a.t. until the politically induced replacement of Biermann in 1963
- 1968 Worked in the laboratory of the photographer Walli Baucik and in the large laboratory of the Deutsche Werbe- und Anzeigengesellschaft (DEWAG)
- 1970 Journey to Bulgaria, first photographic orders taken over
- Since 1971 photographic accompaniment of numerous theatre and opera productions, among others König Hirsch, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin (director: Benno Besson, stage design: Ronald Paris); Carmina Burana, National Opera Sofia (1972, stage design: Ronald Paris), Tasso 75 (1975), Philoktet (1977), Miss Sara Sampson (1978), Dantons Tod (1981), all productions Deutsches Theater Berlin (director: Alexander Lang)
- 1972 Admission to the Association of Visual Artists (VBK) of the GDR
- 1974 Publication of pictures from the Müllfahrer series in Das Magazin
- 1975 Publication of the series Berliner Kneipen also in Das Magazin. Reprographer for female artists and artists, and numerous portraits in parallel
- 1981 Creation of the series Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981–82
- 1981 Portraits of actresses and actors commissioned by Progress Film-Verleih at the Moscow Film Festival. Beginning of the long-term photographic study of self-portraits (until 1989).
- 1982 Creation of the photographic series Georgia during a joint journey with the poet and translator Elke Erb. Completion of work on the series Berliner Jugendliche, begun in 1981.
- 1983-1985 Creation of the series Houses and Faces. Halle 1983–1985
- 1984 Portraits of women in the clothing factory VEB Treffmodelle Berlin, financed by the Gesellschaft für Fotografie im Kulturbund der DDR (Society for Photography in the Cultural Association of the GDR)
- 1986/87 The exhibition of a series of more than 100 photographs of Houses and faces. Halle 1983–85, organised by graphic artist and stage designer Helmut Brade in the Marktschlößchen Halle, a VBK gallery, is cancelled at short notice. The SED Halle district management demands that the show should not be shown during the Handel Festival. The VBK management then postpones the exhibition and finally bans it altogether.
- 1990 Exhibition of Houses and faces. Halle 1983–85 in cooperation between Galerie Moritzburg and Marktschlößchen Halle with more than 16,000 visitors.
Photographs in Volgograd for an exhibition on the Battle of Stalingrad commissioned by the German Confederation of Trade Unions and as part of the photo project Ost sieht West, West sieht Ost by Daimler Benz AG in various West German cities.
- 1991/92 Photographic work in Moscow and Volgograd. Photographs commissioned by the magazine Du on the subject of fallow land in Berlin. Creation of the series Menschen auf dem Todesstreifen
- 1992 Film photography during the shooting of Herzsprung (director: Helke Misselwitz)
- 1993 Creation of the photographic series Friedrichshain

- 1994 Memories of Z., a photographic examination of the post-war years on the occasion of the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from East Germany and thus from the place of Zossen's childhood.
- 1995 Film photography during the shooting of Engelchen (1996, director: Helke Misselwitz)
- 1996 Trip to Italy for Il Legionario
- 1996–1997 Series *Podróż Polska – The Polish Journey*
Participation in the competition for the advertising space on the Alexanderplatz underground station in Berlin with the work *Männer am Alex*
- 1998 Participation in the project *Peripherie als Ort. The Hellersdorf Project*. Creation of a large-format, multi-part construction-bound work for the newly erected employment office in Lutherstadt Wittenberg using own and third-party photographs.
- 1999–2009 Lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences for Technology and Economics, Berlin
- 2000–2001 Film photography during the shooting of *Fremde Oder* (director: Helke Misselwitz)
- 2010 Intensive laboratory work, production of hand fume cupboards for the *Mappenwerk 2010*
- 2011 Creation of the photographic series *Mein Alex*

Helga Paris lives as a freelance photographer in Berlin. Since 1996 she has been a member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Film and Media Art Section.

Solo exhibitions (selection):

- 1978 University of Fine Arts, Dresden, Germany
- 1982 Helga Paris. In Transylvania. Photographs 1982, Gallery Sophienstraße 8, Berlin
- 1986 Helga Paris. Faces, Women in the GDR, Literaturhaus Fasanenstraße, Berlin (West);
Photo gallery of the Lithuanian SSR Artists' Association, Kaunas
- 1987 Small Gallery, Strasbourg
- 1988 Helga Paris. Photographs from Romania, Literaturhaus Fasanenstraße, Berlin (West);
Helga Paris. Photographs, Photo gallery Helsingforser Platz, Berlin
- 1989 Helga Paris. New York, Burg-Galerie Halle and Café at the Arthouse Cinema Babylon, Berlin;
Gallery in the clubhouse Steinstraße, Leipzig
- 1990 Helga Paris. Houses and faces. Halle 1983–85, Galerie Marktschlößchen, Halle;
Helga Paris, Faces from the GDR, Goethe-Institut Rotterdam
- 1993 Gallery Bodo Niemann, Berlin
- 1996 Galerie Condé, Paris and Goethe-Institut Marseille, France
- 1997 Helga Paris. Photographs from 1993 to 1997, Galerie Friedrichshain, Berlin
- 1998 New photography by Helga Paris, Beeskov Castle
- 2000 Helga Paris. Photographs 1983 and 1993, Gallery House 23, Cottbus
- 2003 Gallery argus fotokunst, Berlin
- 2004 Helga Paris. Photographs, Sprengel Museum Hannover; Berlinische Galerie
- 2005 Helga Paris. Photographs, Brandenburg State Museum for Modern Art of the
Brandenburgische Kulturstiftung Cottbus (exhibition in the Sprengel Museum Hannover)
- 2010 Gallery Kicken, Berlin
- since 2012 Helga Paris, Fotografie / Photography, Tour Exhibition of the ifa (Institute for Foreign relations)
- 2016 Reloaded (II), Gallery Kicken, Berlin
- 2017 Helga Paris. Berlin, Between Brigdes, exhibition space Wolfgang Tillmans, Berlin
- 2019 MIRROR. Man in Reflection, Museum Rietberg, Zurich

Various group exhibitions since 1982, among them:

- 1982 IX. art exhibition of the GDR, Dresden
- 1990 Berlin, November 1989 - 14 photographers from East and West experience the opening of the Wall, International travelling exhibition of the Goethe-Institut in the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, afterwards: São Paulo, Santiago de Chile, Vancouver (1991), Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta (1992), Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Karachi (1993), Lahore, Houston, Moscow (1997), Tbilisi, Damascus (1998), Zagreb (1999), Tehran (2001), Moscow (2003), Seoul, Brussels (2004), Porto Alegre (2005), Lemgo, Bordeaux (2007), Tel Aviv (2008), Luxembourg (2009), Glasgow, Ljubljana, Damascus, Beirut, Copenhagen, Athens (2010), Madrid (2011), Seoul (2004)
- 1999 Berlin. Images of Germany II, Willy Brandt House, Berlin
Periphery as a place. The Hellersdorf Project, neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK)

Recent publications (selection):

- Fotografie / Photographs, edited by Inka Schube, Helmut Brade, Jean-François Chevrier, Elke Erb, Inka Schube (texts), Berlin 2004
- Fotografien 1968–1996. Hannah Höch Prize 2004, Ulrich Domröse (text), Cat. Berlinische Galerie, State Museum of Modern Art, Photography and Architecture, Berlin 2004
- Helga. Paris: Fotografie / Photography, edited by Elke aus dem Moore, Inka Schube (text), Stuttgart 2013

Scholarships and Awards

- 1992 Scholarship of the Stiftung Kulturfonds
- 1993 Working scholarship of the Berlin Senate Department for Science and Culture
- 1994 Working scholarship of the Stiftung Kulturfonds
- 1996 Scholarship of the Stiftung Kulturfonds
- 2004 Hannah Höch Prize

Inka Schube

Inka Schube, born 1961 in Burg near Magdeburg, has been curator for photography and media art at the Sprengel Museum Hannover since 2001 and lives in Hannover and Berlin. From 1982 to 1987 she studied art history at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Together with Florian Merkel, she founded the Fotogalerie in der Brotfabrik e.V. in 1990 under the umbrella of Brotfabrik e.V. and was its director until 1998. In addition, she worked as a freelance curator, among others for the Fotobiennale Rotterdam and the nGbK Berlin. In 1997/1998 Schube, supported by an Alfried Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach scholarship for museum practice and photography, worked on the relationship between individual meaning and social meaning in GDR photography.

Helke Misselwitz

Helke Misselwitz, born 1947 in Zwickau, Germany, trained as a cabinet maker and later as a physiotherapist at the same time as completing her A-levels. From 1973 she realised her first own television programmes for the GDR, from 1978 to 1982 she studied at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen, Potsdam-Babelsberg. After graduating, she began working as a freelance director for the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films. She created works such as Aktfotografie, z.B. Gundula Schulze (Nude Photography, e.g. Gundula Schulze) (1983), Haus (Marx-Familie for the DEFA cinema box) (1983 forbidden, 1988 published), Stilleben – Eine Reise zu den Dingen (1984), 35 Fotos (family album of a young woman) (1984), in which she has documentary and photography correspond with each other, reflecting on the photos. From 1985 to 1988 she was a master student of director Heiner Carow at the Akademie der Künste of the GDR. During this time she made the documentary Winter adé (1988), which was a great success. This is followed by the documentary film Wer fürchtet sich vorm schwarzen Mann (Who's afraid of the Bogeyman) (1989), in which she portrays everyday life in a coal store in Prenzlauer Berg run by a woman.

Helga Paris is the film photographer for her feature films Herzsprung (1992) and Engelchen (1996) as well as the documentary Fremde Oder (2000–2001).

From 1997 to 2014 Helke Misselwitz was professor of directing at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam-Babelsberg. Since 1991 she has been a member of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Section Film and Media Art, and since 2018 Deputy Director of the Section.

For the exhibition she created a documentary film triptych on the life and work of Helga Paris, which will be presented in the Max-Liebermann-Saal.

Programme

Thursday, 5 December 2019, 7 pm, Pariser Platz, € 6/4

Presentation of the Helga Paris Archive

Welcome: Werner Heegewaldt (Director of the Archives of the Akademie der Künste), Ingomar Lorch (Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung).

Guests: Helmut Brade, Elke Erb, Christian Grashof, Annett Gröschner, Peter Kahane, Bert Papenfuß

Sunday, 12 January 2020, 7 pm, Max-Liebermann-Saal, Pariser Platz, free admission

Closing event and Book Release

Helga Paris. Leipzig Hauptbahnhof 1981/82, Spector Books Publishing, Leipzig, 2019

Education programme KUNSTWELTEN

In addition to the regular programme of guided tours of “Helga Paris, Photographer”, KUNSTWELTEN is offering special tours in English as well as tours for school groups and tours for blind and partially sighted visitors (registration required). There will also be workshops and talks with Annett Gröschner, Gundula Schulze Eldowy, Jan Faktor and Peter Kahane for pupils.

Tours

Guided tours

Wednesdays 6 pm and Sundays at noon

3 € plus exhibition ticket, without registration

Curator's tour

Sunday, 24 November, noon

with Inka Schube

Further information: www.adk.de/kunstwelten

Heidi Specker: "Apron Awareness"

Text from Journal der Künste 11, Akademie der Künste (Ed.), Berlin 2019

I am especially fond of Helga Paris's pictures of the women in the "Treffmodelle" garment factory. I feel a particular affinity. For the photos, and for the models wearing the apron dresses. They speak to me, and they remind me of something. I recognise myself as a photographer, and I see myself as a child. I write this text while I am taking pictures in Damme, my hometown in the Oldenburger Münsterland, which is one more reason why my views are biographically enlarged.

Mother

As long as I can remember, my mother wore an apron during midsummer. Sleeveless, and with two practical insert pockets, where she kept clothes pins, the house key, and, of course, a handkerchief. Buttoned in the front, and in a wide range of different patterns. Flowered, with flowers big and small. Polka-dotted, with small dots and large ones. Fanciful, with small and large abstract designs. Only on Sundays, when we had visitors, did she ever wear a white apron. The day-to-day outfit was a colourful apron, as colourful as the garden behind the house.

When it was hot outside, she wore nothing, or next to nothing, underneath. The apron was a kind of uniform that she always wore, like all the women among our relatives and in our neighbourhood. The women, whom I called aunt, carried the same rank in front of their names. Aunt Maria, Aunt Trude, Aunt Agnes, Aunt Liesbeth. They all wore an apron and, depending on their body and age, a bra or a corset underneath.

As a child, I looked with great curiosity, but also with a slightly furtive glance, at this interim space between apron fabric, undergarments, and naked skin. It had much to do with eroticism, and yet was still closely associated with work and everyday life. I was not spying secretly through the keyhole of my parents' bedroom; instead I gazed with wonder at the armpit hair that became visible when the laundry was being hung, at the space between the buttons, where the patterns went taut and yet did not reveal anything, or when my mother bent over. She exerted a kind of female attraction on me, which I later discovered in neo-realistic films that featured the Italian as mother, as woman, as fighter.

"[They wear] the vestaglia, literally translated as 'little dressing gown', which in its essence was an intertwining of kitchen and bed. And the neorealismo, which aimed to bring the day-to-day life of the simple people in front of the camera, and in the process was inevitably confronted with the apron (Luchino Visconti's costume designer, in the case of the 1951 film *Bellissima* with Anna Magnani, was able to recruit his aproned extras straight off the street), profited from both its popular appeal and its erotic possibilities. A lightweight fabric, only a few buttons, and easily opened from the front."

Andrea Dernbach, "Der Hausfrauenreport", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 28 March 2009

Father

I'm thinking of when I was approximately the same age as the children in the pictures that Helga Paris took in Hellersdorf. The girls and boys in the pictures are all 13 years old. My father worked as long as he could, and then, after his retirement, he began a part-time job as janitor in an apron factory: Bahlmann & Leiber in Damme. We would often ride our bikes to work together in the morning, until we reached a pedestrian crossing, at which I would turn left to head to school, and he would turn right to go to the apron factory.

I imagined the women who worked at Bahlmann & Leiber to be just like those at the VEB Bekleidungswerk Treffmodelle (a publically-owned clothing factory). I assumed that the seamstresses in the photographs also wore the aprons they sewed. In other words, that they wore precisely what they produced while they produced it. While this was the case at Bahlmann & Leiber, at VEB Treffmodelle they produced heavy fabric for coats.

Photographer

To avoid more speculation, I called Helga Paris and met her at her old Berlin flat. The street she lives on is right around the corner from the former VEB Treffmodelle factory. She gives me a warm welcome – we know each other – and she tells me that she first came to notice the women's faces while shopping at the department store. The women went shopping in the area where they worked, and the clothing factory was right next door. Helga Paris was already familiar with the VEB, because she had done an internship there during her studies, working on the assembly line for back section and centre seam.

It is a group of women whom she has taken photographs of. What is striking is that older women are also part of the work brigade. Many of them wear an apron. My favourite photo depicts a woman in a sleeveless apron made out of polka-dotted material. She has both hands in her pockets, the left one slightly in motion. She is either just putting it into her apron pocket, or pulling it out at that moment. Around her waist, a loose bow is tied. At the shoulders, the apron is offset with a white edging seam. An open face with a tiny smile on the lips looks straight out of the picture; the woman is standing right across from me.

There is a second picture – a woman in a flowered apron, the pattern made of roses. Both hands are lying on a cutting table. In her right hand she holds a pencil the wrong way around, and she, too, looks out at you frontally, with a slight smile, her body also leaning slightly toward the camera. Both women have the same hairdo. The first one brunette, the second blonde. The small difference, the variation, lies in the individual structure of their hair.

My hairdresser at Vokuhila on Kastanienallee in Prenzlauer Berg did her vocational training at PGH Neuer Weg (a skilled crafts and trade production cooperative) in Weimar. She told me about it. They may have also had their own company hairdresser at VEB Treffmodelle. Either the hairdresser of these two women was particularly good at that haircut – short in the front, long in the back – or it was simply modern. And somewhat unisex, because as a girl, as a teenager, I can remember men with haircuts ... hair uniforms ... that were similar to the cuts worn by those women.

Consciousness

Helga Paris wanted to take photos of the women's faces in a calm state. Interesting, because "calm" means not so much away from the rattling of the sewing machines; what Helga Paris meant by that was: at ease with themselves. This state creates the incredible density in the picture itself. Being at ease with yourself means being yourself, being self-reliant, being independent of others. And of the photographer as well. Helga Paris told me of an unbelievable sense of solidarity among the women, and of the sense of community that existed within the brigade.

My eyes are on the aprons. I ask the photographer whether an awareness of clothing – in the sense of what Virginia Woolf referred to as "frock consciousness" – played a role in taking the photos. No, she tells me, that did not cross her mind. But when she looks at the portrait of the blonde woman, Helga Paris always imagines this model speaking with a thick Berlin dialect. Weeste wat? [Know what?]

La classe Operaia va in paradiso

In his film *The Working Class Goes to Heaven*, Elio Petri, a director and author and member of the Italian Communist Party, tells the story of a factory worker who toils away in an exhausting, poorly paid assembly line job. He thinks of his body as a machine, always in pursuit of higher production numbers, until an accident on the job throws him off track. The strike movement that he joins, however, also leads to disillusionment and despair. The interests he is encouraged to support change over time – in the end, however, he remains a cog in the machine. Although his wife, a hairdresser by vocation, does at least do away with her wig in the course of the story. The film, which in 1972 won the Golden Palm in Cannes, was never shown in West German cinemas; the only version dubbed into German comes from the GDR.

The working class no longer exists as such, we now find ourselves in a service-based society. The apron has been replaced by sweatpants and a T-shirt. They have lost value and form, and are now produced in distant low-wage countries. My parents share a grave; they lie together in the ground. But as devout Catholics and upstanding workers, they most certainly made it to heaven. The 13-year-old girls and boys are by now 34. Today the women of the sewing brigade VEB Treffmodelle might be working in a GmbH & Co KG company, or in a grocery chain, or not at all. Where is the way to heaven?

Heidi Specker (* 1962 Damme) lives in Berlin. In her mostly serial photographic works, Specker moves from the subject of architecture to objects to human beings. Her groups of works have been shown at the Sprengel Museum Hannover ("Im Garten"), the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich ("Reprise"), the Mies van der Rohe Haus in Berlin ("Saat Seed"), and most recently at Kunstmuseum Bonn in an exhibition titled "Heidi Specker: Photographer". Heidi Specker is a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig and was a fellow at Villa Massimo in Rome in 2010. While writing this text, she was taking photographs in Damme, her hometown, for an exhibition in February 2020 at the Oldenburger Kunstverein.

Torsten Musial: “Helga Paris. An Archive in Black and White”

Text from Journal der Künste 11, Akademie der Künste (Ed.), Berlin 2019

A thick, heavy, linen-bound office book from the beginning of the last century. Lined pages, already slightly yellowed, with narrowly spaced handwriting. On the left, a series of numbers, and next to them names, places, and abbreviations, in a hand not always easy to read, in some places annotated and then crossed out again. In this journal, the photographer Helga Paris wrote notes on her work, notes that have been of great help to her until very recently. But this book is more than just an aide-memoire or a record of her work. It is the key to her archive of negatives, while also being a diary, but is above all an eloquent expression of her way of working. Paris has now donated her archive to the Akademie der Künste. With 6,300 films and almost 230,000 negatives, it is a rich, subjective chronicle of four decades of Berlin and German history.

Paris insisted from the outset that all the negatives should be archived, in contrast to photo archives that preserve only the best-quality negatives or those selected by the artists. This coincided with the interests of the archive, because this is the only way to document her way of working and how the individual photos came about. Changes in perspective or lighting, exposure or picture composition can be traced, as can the assignment of individual images to image series.

But it soon became apparent that the notes in her journal were not easy for outsiders to decipher and that some details were insufficient. By no means all the persons depicted were named, and many only with first names or nicknames. Often, the places and dates were missing or the circumstances of the picture were not noted. In addition, only two thirds of the films had contact sheets, which would have made it much easier to fill in the gaps in the information.

At great personal effort, Paris succeeded in persuading the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung and the Stiftung Kulturwerk, the cultural foundation of VG Bild-Kunst, to support a project to contextualise the notes. Thanks to their generous support, the Helga Paris Archive has now been made fully accessible. Within two years, her son, the photographer Robert Paris, transferred the films to archival sleeves and folders: until then, they had been stored in ordinary glassine film envelopes in the brimming drawers of an old pharmacist's cabinet. At the light table he sorted numerous loose and not yet marked films. All films have been logged in the archive database and missing contact prints have been made, while incomplete ones have been rendered complete.

The greatest difficulty proved to be the reconstruction of dates and places. Despite her phenomenal memory, Helga Paris was not able to do this alone. Since her children Jenny and Robert grew up in the midst of her every-day work and came regularly into contact with the taking and use of the photos, Paris requested their help. Both were able to successfully contribute their memories of people, dates, places, and contexts.

In some cases, however, investigative instinct was needed to determine the missing dates. For this they guessed the age of children they were friends with, deciphered the years given on posters glued to advertising pillars appearing by chance in the pictures, or deduced the period when the photos were taken from the clothing fashions. In their research, however, the two of them were able to fall back on a whole network of friends and acquaintances. They even asked some of the people pictured about their memories of the shots. This crowdsourcing project enabled them to add numerous details. But completion is still ongoing and will continue even beyond the end of the project. In addition, a keyword catalogue has been established, which makes it possible not only to bring different image series together virtually, but also to research specific topics. As a result, one of the most important and substantial contemporary photo archives is now becoming accessible. And not only that, for the vast amount of information obtained now makes it possible to search for people, places, or series of pictures from a wide variety of points of view. An invaluable advantage for the archive is that the excellent preparatory work means that the collection is joining our institution in a highly organised state and will be available for research relatively soon.

Torsten Musial is head of the Film and Media Arts Archives of the Akademie der Künste.

Press Photos

Helga Paris, Photographer

8 November 2019 – 12 January 2020

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Helga Paris
Selbst im Spiegel (Self-Portrait in the Mirror), 1971
Photo © Helga Paris. Source: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
Ramona, 1982
Photo © Helga Paris. Source: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
No title, 1984
From the series *Frauen im Bekleidungswerk VEB Treffmodelle Berlin*
(Women at the Clothing factory VEB Treffmodelle Berlin)
Photo © Helga Paris. Source: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
Sven, 1981/82
From the series *Berliner Jugendliche* (Berlin Youth)
Photo © Helga Paris

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Helga Paris
No title, 1975
From the series *Berliner Kneipen* (Berlin Pubs)
Photo © Helga Paris



Helga Paris
No title, 1998
From the series *Hellersdorf*
Photo © Helga Paris



Helga Paris
No title, 1974
From the series *Müllfahrer* (Garbage Drivers)
Photo © Helga Paris



Helga Paris
No title, 1982
From the series *Georgien* (Georgia)
Photo © Helga Paris. Quelle: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
Meteln (Christa and Gerhard Wolf), 1977
Photo © Helga Paris

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Helga Paris
Winsstraße mit Taube (Winsstrasse with Pigeon), 1970s
 From *Berlin 1974–1982*
 Photo © Helga Paris. Quelle: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
 No title, 1983–1985
 From the series *Häuser und Gesichter. Halle 1983–1985*
 (Buildings and Faces. Halle 1983–1985)
 Photo © Helga Paris. Quelle: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)



Helga Paris
 No title, 1991/92
 From the series *Moskau 1991/92* (Moscow 1991/92)
 Photo © Helga Paris



Helga Paris
Sohn des Architekten Melnikow (The Son of the Architect Konstantin S. Melnikov), 1991/92
 From the series *Moskau 1991/92* (Moscow 1991/92)
 Photo © Helga Paris



Helga Paris
Prerow, 1960s
 Photo © Helga Paris